The Pulpit

A Journal of Contemporary Preaching

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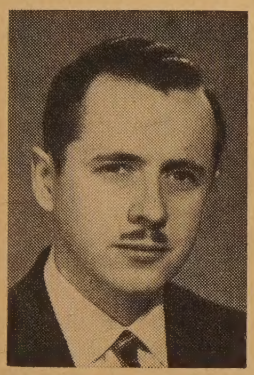

L. Wilson Kilgore:

"I Wonder as I Wander"

William Sloane Coffin, Jr. • Power of the Resurrection

Lloyd J. Averill • Golgotha

John R. Bodo • The People's Choice

Ilion T. Jones • Christian Scribes

WILLIAM JOSEPH BARNDS

JONATHAN SWIFT, PREACHER

VOL. XXXII, No. 4 APRIL 1961

The Pulpit

Founded 1929 by Charles Clayton Morrison as a journal of contemporary preaching.

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35 cents single issue.

$4 a year in U.S.A. and Canada.

$4.50 foreign.

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Published monthly by the Christian Century Foundation, 407 S. Dearborn St., Chicago 5, Ill. HArrison 7-5380.

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PULPIT POST

A Freudian Slip

SIR: No doubt there are some among your readers who would prefer the title *Death Came to Existentialism,* but the book Viktor E. Frankl wrote is *From Death-Camp to Existentialism.*

I submit the following quotation for use in the Trading Post:

> Do not meddle with mirth over which you cannot make the sign of the Cross and ask Him to bless it; and do not keep Him out of your gladness, or it will leave bitterness on your lips, howsoever sweet it tastes at first. — Alexander Maclaren in *Expositions of Holy Scripture.*

These words, written over 50 years ago by a great preacher of Scotland, have pertinent meaning today, when we consider how much of our mirth — or fun, recreation, etc. — is so far removed from the Cross of Christ.

FLETCHER BENNETT
Trinity Methodist Church
Superior, Wis.

A Contribution

SIR: Below is an original illustration which I am sending in exchange for one used from the January "Trading Post":

When the building committee were trying to decide on the features of the face of Christ in the main window of our church they looked at the cartoon of the window spread out on the floor. None was satisfied with what the artist had done. Change after change was made to no avail. Finally the artist took the original sketch and hung it high on the wall where we had to look up rather than down and immediately every one was completely satisfied with what he saw.

VAL L. SHERMAN
First Methodist Church
Victoria, Texas

Eisegesis

SIR: I was much taken with Franklin D. Elmer, Jr.'s homily "He Treated the Boss — and Cured the Servant" (February). Unfortunately, I took the author's advice and read his text (Matt. 8:5-13). It's disillusioning.

The point of the scripture is that the centurion recognized Jesus' authority and is commended for his faith. The centurion is spoken of very highly in Luke's account. This hardly gibes with the picture painted in the homily of "power hungry men of authority who expect people to

(Continued on page 31)

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VOLUME XXXII APRIL 1961 NO. 4

The Fourth Diluting Myth: Ecclesiasticism

TODAY almost everybody is asking what is wrong with the church. The past decade has seen an intense and extensive probing into ecclesiastical innards. Even the lowest of the low church denominations have been studiously inquiring about the nature of the church. Is this ecclesiastical introspection a symptom of sickness or is it an evidence of health? Is it a morbid, ecclesiastical hypochondria or is it an acute awareness of disease and a wholesome concern for a recovery?

It is worth noting that these questions about the health of the church are being raised in a generation in which the church has prospered externally as it has not in any other period in the history of Christianity. It is in such a day that we are raising the question, "What is wrong with the church?" Note for a moment that human beings are preoccupied with their physical bodies only when they are actually sick. Either there are aches and pains and weaknesses which call attention to a sickness which is a genuine bodily ailment or the mind and the emotions are sick and they transfer the sense of physical sickness to the body. Watch your ten-year-old boy playing football in the yard. He is totally indifferent to his body; but, after a time, he may come in complaining that he has been injured or that his stomach aches. It is possible that he *has* been injured or that his stomach *does* ache; but it is also possible, indeed probable, that he has remembered the unfinished homework which is due at school the next day.

Why does the church have this morbid preoccupation with itself, this sickly self-consciousness, this inordinate ecclesiasticism? We pry into and test the forms of the church, but the answer is not there. For the disease is not structural but spiritual, not somatic but psychic. What is the answer? Does the church hope that by showing great concern for its health it can escape blame for not confronting with its gospel the tough social issues of our day? This is characteristic of the hypochondriac. So long as he can complain that something is wrong with him he escapes accountability for what is wrong with the world. This is one way we human beings handle the "failure complex." And just now we are so busy with our concern about restructuring the church that we have no time or energy for anything else. Later, we say, we shall take up the issues of war and peace, racial tension, religious bigotry, saturation bombing, germ warfare, starving Chinese. So the church reclines by the healing pool of obedient service and to Christ's question, "Do you want to be healed?" it has to answer, "No, not really."

Or is it possible that the church is morbidly preoccupied with itself *because* it does not recognize the perils facing it? From the time when Christendom numbered half the people in the world we are now moving rapidly toward that day when it will enroll only one fourth of the people in the world. In another 25 years the Moslems may take most of Africa; in Asia national religions threaten the existence of the Christian minorities; and here at home the church is being lifted to a pedestal where it exchanges potency for prestige. In *The Idea of a Christian Society* T. S. Eliot wrote, "If anybody ever attacked democracy, I might discover what the word meant." This can also be said of the church. The church is under attack; but the open attack is in distant lands and the attack at home is devious and subtle. If the church should wake to the gravity of the situation, it would be so caught up in being and doing that wasteful introversions would cease.

The sickness of the church is the sickness of Sardis: "I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead. . . . Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and repent. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you." How precise and penetrating these words are as they speak of the Christ who is dissatisfied with his church, with its outward life and its inner disease, and who plants his discontentment in the bosom of the church. He has not found our *works* perfect in the sight of his God, not our structure but our *works*. So he comes to us like a thief, a strange thief who steals none of our riches but takes away only our contentment. He leaves exterior fatness and leanness in our souls. What is wrong with the church is not a disease afflicting its body but deep *dis-ease*. So long as the church forgets what God has given and neglects what God has commanded, the disturbing thief remains. —

Kyle Haselden

"I Wonder as I Wander"

By L. Wilson Kilgore

ONE of the most beautiful and haunting of all American folk melodies is the Appalachian carol, "I Wonder as I Wander." It is reported that it was discovered by John Jacob Niles on a Sunday afternoon in July, 1933. Annie Morgan, a singer with a band of traveling evangelists, sang the song over and over again until Mr. Niles had it fixed on paper and in his mind. Then Annie Morgan and her companions disappeared. No one has ever been able to find any trace of them since that time.

The song recaptures the experience of meditation during a walk on the mountain on a cool, crisp evening. It is a time of thought; the mood is one of reflection; the emotions run deep at such a time. The beauty and grandeur of nature as seen on a mountain walk are bound to set a man to thinking and to wondering. One can understand the cry of the psalmist at such a time:

> I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills;
> From whence cometh my help?

There are no answers from the hills. There is only beauty and grandeur and the cruelty and impartiality of nature. Dr. Sockman pointed out in one of his sermons that, after all, "the God of nature has no arms." There is no warmth there. There is no love. The hills and valleys, though beautiful and inspiring, make no lasting answers to the deep questions of life.

> I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills;
> From whence cometh my help?
> My help cometh even from the Lord,
> Who hath made heaven and earth.

Only the answers which God can give can satisfy the deep and probing questions we ask on any mountaintop or in any valley. As it begins, the carol is about Christmas. The celebration of the birth of Christ is definitely in mind as a cause for much rejoicing, but there is the thought on this mountain walk that though this child was born, *he also died.* So, unlike most songs we sing at Christmas, we are carried beyond the babe in Bethlehem's manger to the Man who died on Calvary's Cross.

> I wonder as I wander out under the sky,
> How Jesus the Savior did come for to die,
> For poor on'ry people like you and like I.
> I wonder as I wander out under the sky.[1]

Like the gospel writers who wrote of the wonderful birth of Jesus, and yet also knew the end of the story on Calvary, this carol reminds us of the deep facts of Christ's life. He came, he suffered, he died. "Why?" we ask.

In the first place, while ours is a world of much joy and happiness, it is also a world of suffering. No one can escape this fact. There are some who try to hide from the grim realities of life. There are some who seem to be spared sorrow. There are even some religions — if they can be called that in the completeness of that word — which try to wipe away suffering and sorrow. But no matter how we hide or delude ourselves or even try to believe there is no evil or suffering, the grim, cruel fact remains: suffering is part and parcel of our lives. And nowhere is it promised that it will be any different. I have never found any passage of the Bible so exclusively true of itself that all other passages are outlawed, which promises us that God will deliver us on this earth from the tears and toil of life. It is a life of great joy, of much pleasure, and to live is to enjoy life; but it is also a life of pain and suffering. No man can be blind to this.

So, if Jesus was to come to this life it was almost inevitable that he too would suffer. He was destined to suffer if he was to be a man. He would have to suffer if he was to live his manhood completely without exemption or preference. Can you for one moment think of Jesus asking for exemption or preference from the grim realities of life? He would want to take his chances on these, as all men must take their chances. He would not be — in fact, could not be — our Savior otherwise.

L. Wilson Kilgore *is a graduate of Colgate University (B.A.) and Colgate Rochester Divinity School (B.D.). In March, 1953, he became pastor of Lakewood Presbyterian Church, Cleveland, after having served as minister of the First Presbyterian Church of Hartford, Connecticut for ten years. He is the founder of the Cleveland chapter of Divorcees Anonymous and is currently appearing on a weekly television program in Cleveland, speaking on religion and modern marriage.*

[1] Copyright, 1934, by G. Schirmer, publisher of "I Wonder as I Wander," by John Jacob Niles. Used by permission.

So part of the answer to the question raised by the carol is part and parcel of our very existence. For man to live is to suffer. We can understand the conclusion of J. B., in the play, who says:

> The candles in the churches are out,
> The lights have gone out in the sky!
> . . . we are, and what we are can suffer. . . .[2]

Jesus entered this life, as all of us do, through the processes of birth; he lived this life, as all of us must, in the constant risk of suffering. This is the first answer to the wondering thoughts of the wandering caroler.

The question persists, however. Why him? Why Jesus? Why did he have to die? If God was in Christ — if there is the incarnation, then why did Jesus have to die on Calvary's cross? The answer is both simple and profound: Jesus died on the cross to show us that God also suffers.

Christians affirm that God was in Christ. So God was suffering also. This was not just some lonely saint, some advanced pioneer, some reckless prophet who was suffering and dying on Calvary; God was there. God was in Christ. He was in Christ from the beginning. He increased in Christ, as Jesus opened up his life to the promptings and will of God in meditation and in prayer. Somewhere there was a moment of complete identification of God in this One. Some say it was at birth; others say it took place in that time of sanctification in the temptation in the wilderness and the baptism. In whatever way it happened, God was in Christ.

Thus comes the answer to man's query about the exact nature of the heart of life and the universe. God is love; God suffers with us; God understands; for in Christ God endured all of the suffering of our life, not only because Christ became human, but to show once and for all that God also suffers. God is more then than prime mover, first cause, divine engineer, celestial administrator; God is love and love suffers. God was in Christ suffering to let us know that at the heart of things there is One who understands and knows our every situation.

Martin Buber, the Jewish theologian, has stated it with these words: "The Absolute Power is, for human personality's sake, become personality . . . He offers Himself to him as an Answer." He said this of Job who suffered so much. How much more could we Christians say this of Jesus. In him, God offered himself — "the Absolute Power becoming personality, as an answer to man's questions about the nature of God." And this God understands and loves us in all of the terrible moments of our existence.

What an answer to that question posed by the carol! Jesus as a man had to suffer in our world of suffering. He did it to demonstrate that God suffers with us. In doing it, Jesus made it clear that we could live without fear.

This is our need also, for we are filled with fear and uncertainty. We are anxious and troubled. There is much evidence to show that Americans, of all people, with the highest standard of living in the world, seem to be demonstrating much fear. We are not living life with calmness. We are afraid of the future and the uncertainties of the times. When suffering comes we seem to go to pieces as the little "ruts" and "boxes" in which we live and compartmentalize life are broken up. Our hopelessness and helplessness is all too obvious.

Of course these are terrible times. As the poet Archibald MacLeish has written, this is a time:

> . . . in which life brings with it such inexplicable sufferings; a time in which millions upon millions of men and women and children are destroyed and mutilated for no crime but the crime of being born in a certain century or of belonging to a certain race or of inhabiting a certain city: a time in which the most shameless and cynical tyranny flourishes, in which the ancient decencies are turned inside out to make masks for cruelty and fraud, in which even the meaning of the holiest words is perverted to deceive men and enslave them . . .[3]

The main question is, are we going to live in such times torn by fear, or will we live in such times calmed by a quiet and profound faith?

Love, faith, hope, compassion, gentleness, strength of conviction, courage for life — all of these are the ingredients of living life without fear. And from whence do these spring except from our faith in the God who created us and sustains us and to whom we return at close of day when life's work is over. This is the only kind of faith that can overcome the limitations of human nature, and which must reflect an "eternal and gracious power."

For this was Jesus' faith and belief. Only once did he waver in his faith that God was with him even on the cross. Soon after he cried, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" he said, quietly and serenely, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." We cannot believe in our lives unless we believe in God. While God does not promise us life without suffering, he has promised us that he suffers with us and sustains us in love so that we can live life without fear. This is one reason why "Jesus the Savior did come for to die."

The god of Nature may have no arms of compassion. But the God of Christ does. Jesus came to this world of suffering and, like us, was called upon to endure it. But he taught us that God suffers with us and reminded us that we too can live life in faith and without fear. We no longer have to

> . . . wonder as I wander out under the sky,
> How Jesus the Savior did come for to die,
> For poor on'ry people like you and like I.

[2] Archibald MacLeish, *J. B.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957). Used by permission.

[3] Archibald MacLeish, "The Book of Job," *The Christian Century*, April 8, 1959. Used by permission.

Jonathan Swift, Preacher

By William Joseph Barnds

SWIFT did not enjoy preaching. In fact, he regarded his own sermons as nearly worthless. When he gave his whole collection of sermons to Dr. Thomas Sheridan, he said, "Here are a bundle of my old Sermons; you may have them if you please; they may be of some use to you: they have never been of any to me" (Quoted in the introductory part of Volume XIV of Swift's *Works,* New York, 1812).

He did, however, have very definite ideas about preaching and the practical subject of sermon preparation and delivery. These ideas are presented in "A Letter to a Young Clergyman Lately entered into Holy Orders" (*Works,* vol. VIII). Swift, writing from Dublin on January 9, 1719-20, began in a quite disarming way, by saying, "Although it was against my knowledge or advice that you entered into holy orders, under the present dispositions of mankind toward the church, yet since it is now supposed too late to recede, (at least according to the general practice and opinion) I cannot forbear offering my thoughts to you upon this new condition of life you are engaged in."

Having been a clergyman himself for a quarter of a century, Swift offered his young colleague the following advice:

> You will do well if you can prevail upon some intimate and judicious friend to be your constant hearer, and allow him with the utmost freedom to give you notice of whatever he should find amiss, either in your voice or gesture: for want of which early warning, many clergymen continue defective, and sometimes ridiculous, to the end of their lives *(Ibid,* p. 4).

Besides securing a frank and sensible critic, the newly ordained clergyman was also advised by Swift to study the English language — "the neglect whereof is one of the most general defects among the scholars of this kingdom, who seem not to have the least conception of a style, but run on in a flat kind of phraseology, often mingled with barbarous terms and expressions, peculiar to the nation."

Swift thought it best for a clergyman to avoid all obscure terms, for, he explained, "a divine has nothing to say to the wisest congregation of any parish in this kingdom, which he may not express in a manner to be understood by the meanest among them."

He warned the young man against frequently using "flat unnecessary epithets" and "old threadbare phrases, which will often make you go out of your way to find and apply them, are nauseous to rational hearers, and will seldom express your meaning, as well as your own natural words." Swift was an ardent advocate for simplicity in the preparation and delivery of sermons.

The Dean recommended driving home some one particular point. He wrote: "If your arguments be strong, in God's name offer them in as moving a manner as the nature of the subject will properly admit." The purpose of preaching, Swift told the young clergyman, was "first, to tell the people what is their duty, and then to convince them that it is so."

Theoretically, Swift was against the practice of preachers reading their sermons. He believed, however, that if a man read his sermon, at least it indicated that he had made some preparation, whereas, if it were not read, the preacher probably had not even made preparation.

So practical was Swift's advice about preparing the sermon manuscript, that it seems elementary and trite. He advised the preacher to write the whole sermon in a large, plain hand, with all the forms of margin, paragraph, marked page and the like. He suggested that the preacher run over the sermon five or six times on Sunday morning. He urged the young clergyman "to add one half crown a year to the article of paper; to transcribe your sermons in as large and plain a manner as you can; and either make no interlineations, or change the whole leaf; for we, your hearers, would rather you should be less correct, than perpetually stammering

---

WILLIAM JOSEPH BARNDS, *vicar of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Ogallala, Nebraska, is a graduate of the University of Nebraska (A.B. and M.A.) and took his S.T.B. degree at General Theological Seminary, New York.*

Mr. Barnds' article, "Jonathan Swift, Preacher," first appeared in The Anglican Theological Review *XL (1958) and is here reprinted by permission.*

which I take to be one of the worst solecisms in rhethoric [sic]."

Reaffirming his belief that the clergy should practice preaching, Swift wrote: "And lastly, read your sermon once or twice a day for a few days before you preach it."

He strongly urged the young man to avoid wit in his sermons, for, he held, "it is very near a million to one that you have none; and because too many of your calling have consequently made themselves everlastingly ridiculous by attempting it."

Before a preacher disparaged a subject or a philosophy in a sermon, Swift advised that he first inquire as to what it was he wanted to run down!

The Dean cautioned against using too many quotations, and suggested that on the whole quotations be confined to those from Holy Scripture.

Concerning the practice of "explaining mysteries" which some preachers indulged in, Swift stated: "I do not find that you are any where directed in the canons or articles, to attempt explaining the mysteries of the Christian religion. And, indeed, since providence intended there should be mysteries, I do not see how it can be agreeable to piety, orthodoxy, or good sense to go about such a work. For, to me, there seems to be a manifest dilemma in the case: if you explain them, they are mysteries no longer; if you fail, you have laboured to no purpose. What I should think most reasonable and safe for you to do upon this occasion, is, upon solemn days, to deliver the doctrine as the church holds it; and confirm it by scripture."

In reference to the subject of preachers attacking straw men and philosophies incompatible with the Christian religion, Swift doubted whether it was wise "to perplex the minds of well-disposed people with doubts, which probably would never have otherwise come into their heads." In the same vein, he observed, "I think the clergy have almost given over perplexing themselves and their hearers with abstruse points of predestination, election, and the like."

Swift's advice on preparing and delivering sermons has seldom been excelled, even by that band of homiletic instructors who have written about, and taught, the subject of preaching in the past 238 years, since the time Swift composed his letter on the subject.

Swift seems to have heeded his own advice as far as the composition of sermons is concerned. His extant sermons are characterized by a simple and straightforward manner. He spoke in terms which nearly anyone would be able to understand, and his suggestions were practical.

For instance, in his sermon on "The Difficulty of Knowing One's Self," Swift endeavored to prove that man was generally the most ignorant creature in the world regarding himself. To prove this point he asserted that men seldom conversed with themselves or took notice of what passed within them. He deplored the all-too-true fact that the "average Churchman" almost never examined himself.

Swift said that men failed to reflect on their lives because that was a work and labor of the mind which could not be performed without some pain and difficulty. Men seldom conversed with themselves, the Dean observed, because the business of the world took up all their time, and especially "because such conversation with his own heart may discover some vice or some infirmity within him, which he is very unwilling to believe himself guilty of." Swift succeeded in driving home the point that man is very ignorant of himself, and he endeavored then to tell his listeners what their duty was in that respect, and to convince them to practice private self-examination.

In Swift's sermon on "The Trinity" he showed that he followed his own advice concerning sermons on mysteries. "The doctrine of the Trinity," said Swift, "as delivered in holy Scriptures, though not exactly in the same words, is very short, and amounts only to this: that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are each of them God, and yet there is but one God." The Dean stated that "this union and distinction are a mystery unknown to mankind." His position on this subject was summarized in these words: "This is enough for any good Christian to believe on this great article, without ever inquiring any farther. And this can be contrary to no man's reason, although the knowledge of it is hid from him."

True to his own advice which he had offered the young clergyman, Swift delivered the doctrine as the church holds it, and then confirmed it by scripture in the rest of the sermon.

Dean Swift showed at the beginning of most of his sermons that he had a purpose in preparing each one, and that he knew what his plan was to accomplish his purpose.

For instance, in a sermon on "False Witness," Swift stated at the outset that he intended to show his hearers several ways by which a man might be called a false witness against his neighbors.

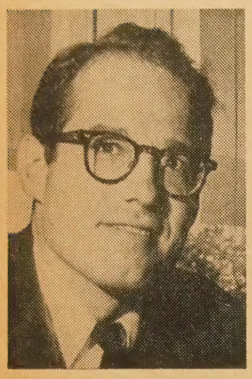
He said, "I shall give you some rules for your conduct and behaviour, in order to defend yourselves against the malice and cunning of false accusers."

"And lastly," Swift said in the introductory part of the sermon, "I shall conclude with showing you very briefly, how far it is your duty, as good subjects and good neighbours, to bear faithful witness, when you are lawfully called to it by those in authority, or by the sincere advice of your own conscience."

Swift's sermon on "Sleeping in Church" contains a few parts which will never grow old. He said that some men were frequently absent from church. The excuses for their absence he then

enumerated: "Some are so unfortunate as to be always indisposed on the Lord's day." "Others have their affairs so oddly contrived, as to be always unluckily prevented by business." "Others again discover strange fits of laziness, that seize them, particularly on that day, and confine them to their beds." Others "keep the sabbath by eating, drinking, and sleeping, after the toil and labour of the week."

What these quotations show is that Swift was well aware of the various excuses churchmen make for neglecting the worship of God, and that very little ingenuity has been used during the past two centuries by churchmen in inventing new excuses!



Dealing with the Resurrection in a Post-Christian Era

The Power of the Resurrection

By William Sloane Coffin, Jr.

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. John 12:24.

THE Easter sermon is without question the hardest of the year to prepare, and many a moment this last week I wished I had given the assignment to another. In the first place one has to be so ruthlessly honest with one's self, which perhaps is why so many Easter sermons are sentimental. "Sentimentality," said Joyce, "is an unearned emotion." Emotion should rise out of the truth, but sentimentality is that emotion poured on top. Then there is a second difficulty: we live — let's face it — in a post-Christian era. What, then, can we say that is at all meaningful to people for whom the resurrection of Jesus Christ is like a picture whose brightness is faded beyond hope of restoration, a mere memory of a memory?

First let me make three brief comments of a general nature. Very often the things we find most difficult to define objectively are the things of which we are the most certain: courage, friendship or love. Will anyone hold back from marriage until he has solved objectively the ontological problem of his beloved's existence? No, for as Browning wrote, "Not since we know we love, but since we love we know enough." There is, in short, knowledge which from the point of view of logic demands risk and venture.

The second comment is that Christianity does not claim to clear up all the mysteries of life. Far from it. If this world is indeed God's creation then it is ten times as mysterious as if it were not. The revelation of God is far less the clearing up of mystery than it is the disclosure of new mystery. A large degree of intellectual agnosticism is thus part of any religious position.

And the third comment is the suggestion that while intellectual agnosticism is absolutely indispensable from a religious point of view, religious agnosticism is impossible from a practical point of view. We cannot forever suspend judgment on the question of the existence of God. Not long ago in Grand Central Station I watched a sailor climb on a Springfield express ("express" is a mighty broad term on the New Haven Railroad). He was completely drunk and had no ticket. This concerned the kindly conductor far less than the question of whether the man did not really want to go eventually to the New London Naval Base, which meant, of course, that he had to change in New Haven. The sailor said he had not made up his mind. Well, he never did, and while he was suspending judgment he went on to Springfield. As with the sailor, so with the religious agnostic. His position is only philosophically possible, for no commitment in theory becomes a commitment in practice.

WILLIAM SLOANE COFFIN, JR. *was named chaplain of Yale University on July 1, 1958. He received his B.A. degree from Yale in 1949 and then, during the following year, pursued graduate study at Union Theological Seminary (where his uncle, the late Henry Sloane Coffin, had been president from 1926 to 1945). In 1953, after serving abroad during the Korean War, Mr. Coffin entered Yale Divinity School and took his B.D. degree in 1956.*

Practically speaking, you are a believer or an atheist.

Now, in keeping with the times, let us proceed in existential fashion and go not from the biblical resurrection to us, but from us to the biblical resurrection. Here at Yale we have, as we have always had, sheep "who have gone astray," a fair-sized herd of blue ribbon sheep retreating from the implacabilities of the world at large into their own private worlds. But these, I submit, are a minority. Never before, perhaps, have we had so many serious students — and teachers — sensitive souls who, if they cannot see Easter, *can* see Good Friday, at least in all its human aspects; can see that the cry of humanity in its death throes bequeathing its spirit to the oncoming night is a meaningful symbol for a century that has planted more senseless crosses than any other. But is it not true that we find in life more problems than power to deal with them? Is it not true that while we are strong on opinions we are weak on convictions? Finding little ultimate meaning to life, we seem singularly incapable of bringing to our society and world the radical cultural renovation it desperately needs. May I suggest then that we are hard up against the limits of thought. For thought, while it can give range, cannot give footing; while it can push back horizons, cannot establish foundations; while it can challenge and doubt, cannot give power to live. For ultimate convictions and for the power that flows from them, has not Athens always had to look to Jerusalem? It was the Greeks who by the first century had reached the dead end of the purely intellectual life — doubting everything — that Paul called the blind leading the blind. And how symbolic that the words of our text should also have been spoken to Greeks! To the Greeks who thought the unreflective life the only one not worth living Jesus said, No, the uncommitted life is finally the one not worth living. "He who loses his life will find it": there's the meaning. "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies it bears much fruit": there's the power. In death to self man finds life in God.

Hasn't that always been the answer of religious Jerusalem to humanistic, self-sufficient Athens? Man's true life is not the life of the mind alone, but the life of the willing, deciding, acting self; and meaning and power for this total self are found only in total self-commitment to God. Not the reason, but the conscience disclosed to the Hebrew prophets the ultimate meaning of the universe. Not through the intellect, but through moral consciousness God comes to man. "I will give them a heart that they may know me."

"Not since we know we love, but since we love we know enough." How little we do know of God! Yet is it because we are not profound enough, or rather because we are not good enough, because we are such strangers to his type of goodness? But "God is love" means he is only known through love. When, however, we do begin to believe that love is the clue to reality, love — that knowledge which from the point of view of logic demands risk and venture — then and only then are we in a position to begin to understand the mystery of Jesus — God's love in person on earth. Then also are we in a position to approach the mystery of resurrection.

The church has never been primarily concerned with mere physical life and death, neither Christ's nor ours. Meaning and power are not there. What the church *has* been desperately concerned to find out is whether or not selfish men can destroy the selfless love of God. The doctrine of the resurrection is an expression of the deep-seated conviction that while men may crucify God's love they cannot keep it dead and buried. But this truth is an existential one, a truth that each has to "make true" for himself, a truth not to be thought out but to be lived out. "It is no longer I who live," says Paul, "but Christ who lives within me." A British worker, asked if he believed Jesus changed the water into wine at Cana, replied, "I don't know about that, but in my house he changed beer to furniture, and that's miracle enough for me." And that should be miracle enough for all of us. It is the miracles that Christ wrought *in people,* and still works *in people* that the church is constantly proclaiming. Of course we would like to know more about the resurrection of Jesus — but can we, and do we have to, for the miracle of the resurrection is essentially the miracle of your resurrection and mine made possible by the power of God's deathless love.

"The kingdom of God consists not in words but in power," says Paul. Surely the best biblical witness to the resurrection of Christ is the power that made Peter, long after Jesus' death, twice the man he was before; the power that made Stephen under the rain of death-dealing stones cry out, Christlike, "Father, forgive"; the power that enabled a host of other martyrs to water with their blood the seed of the early church, that tiny acorn which split the mighty boulder that was the Roman Empire.

O God, had we that power! The darkness of the oncoming night might prove the early mist of Easter morn!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ shows we are dealing with a trustworthy, promise-keeping God. Now he makes us a promise: if we will die to self we will find life in Christ. But the terms of the promise constitute also a challenge. Faith is a gift, but it is also a conquest. To conquer we must risk. We cannot lend ourselves tentatively, but give ourselves wholly, for "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies it bears much fruit."

Golgotha

By Lloyd J. Averill

WELL, so that is that. The man is dead, and the sordid spectacle is over. Soon the crowd will be climbing back down the Hill of the Skull as they came.

Is it just imagination, or are they quieter than usual on that return climb down toward the town? Matters of this kind are usually quite routine. This is not the first crucifixion at this place, and it is not likely to be the last. But it is by all odds the strangest. Ordinarily the people go as they came, bearing with them a kind of carnival mood to match the carnal display of crucifixion. Only an occasional man is sobered by the anguish and humiliation of the dying one, and only an occasional woman is moved to pitying tears. They have strong stomachs, these who come to watch the cruel sport of Rome.

But today on that return homeward their strength seems drained out of them, and their appetite for death replaced by a strange new hunger. What was it the legionnaire standing by that central cross had said? "Certainly this was a righteous man!" Some who were near thought they heard him say, "Truly this man was the Son of God." An astonishing sentiment in either case, for one whose vocation is so unsentimental. Yet the centurion seems to have spoken for the crowd. Though they, perhaps, could not have put it to words, still that silent descent into the city speaks their own dumb awareness that something out of the way has happened here.

Somehow it was wrong from the very first. The note on which it started should have warned them that it would end unexpectedly. With ordinary criminals, the mood at the beginning of the execution scene is defiant. The crowd is practiced in its taunting mockery, seeking to provoke an angry dialogue with the man on the cross. And they are seldom disappointed. Their insults are answered by the condemned man with violent profanity usually, by a furious denunciation alike of his verbal tormenters and his official executioners. Sometimes his torrent of answering words becomes a speech, the cross a gruesome platform for a final flaunting of the revolutionary ideas which brought his arrest and condemnation. Then the crowd is even more delighted, and the scene becomes a mock political rally, hissing and applauding, and driving the condemned man to frantic and furious exhaustion.

Today it had not gone that way at all. The crowd had surely done its part. "They that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, 'Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.'" "And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, 'If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.' And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek and Latin and Hebrew, This is the king of the Jews." But there was no responding profanity, no fury of denunciation, no defiant and angry reassertion of his revolutionary claims. There was only a single unnerving sentence: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

That's the way it had begun. There was something unnatural about it, but the crowd was sure it couldn't last. Although they had been disappointed with the first scene in this drama of death, they were certain the second scene would be conventional enough.

For ordinarily after a condemned man had spent himself in the energy of his defiance, he would soon begin to feel the growing discomfort of the ridiculous posture in which he was bound on the cross. The unutterable weariness which spread through every muscle gave way to growing pain, and the full indignity and hopelessness of his plight began to flood in upon him. Then he would turn from the crowd to his companions in death who had perhaps also been his compatriots in revolu-

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tion. And whereas there was at first comradeship in their common condemnation, there came now a bitter denunciation of each other. Turning away from the crowd, one condemned man blamed another for this fatal consequence, and each held all responsible for the suffering which was now their lot. At this turn of events, the crowd would join in mock sympathy, siding first with one and then with another of the malefactors, goading them in their orgy of self-pitying accusation.

Today this second scene in the drama of death, though it began conventionally enough, ended in strangely unconventional fashion. Something happened midway through which brought it to an unanticipated conclusion. "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, 'If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us.' But the other answering rebuked him, saying, 'Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.' And he said unto Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.' And Jesus said unto him, 'Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise.' "

To the crowd there was something incongruous in all that. Compassion is oddly out of place in such a setting. So preoccupied with the growing intensity of his own suffering, so given to accusing others in order to be rid of the added pain of self-accusation, the condemned ordinarily has no capacity left for compassion at the plight of another. It is a jarring note, and it leaves its hearers all the more shaken for the quietness with which it is spoken.

Nor have they recovered from this unsettling word when compassion speaks yet again. "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, 'Woman, behold thy son!' Then saith he to the disciple, 'Behold thy mother!' And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."

Now incongruity deepened into mystery, and mystery widened into a strange restlessness among the spectators. Something was happening here which they could not understand, which they had never before encountered, and it was turning a carnival into a scene of compelling seriousness. What was more distracting was the odd sensation that the roles in this drama of death had become reversed, so that the drama was being directed, not from the crowd, but from the cross.

Then suddenly the mood of the drama changed, and the crowd found itself thrust unwillingly into its third scene. Ominous clouds had rolled unnoticed over the Hill of the Skull, bringing a sullen darkness upon the landscape. The men in the crowd cast uneasy, superstitious glances at the sky, milling restlessly about, seeming to wait for something to happen without quite knowing what it might be. When it came they were not prepared for it. For the mood of the man on the cross had also changed, and there came forth from his lips a startling cry. "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?'* that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was a terrifying cry, and the more superstitious in the crowd raised their hands to their faces, almost as if to ward off a danger which they could not see but only sense. Ordinarily the cry of a condemned man from a cross would be turned back upon him with derisive laughter as the crowd sought to intensify his humiliation. Now it was the crowd which felt humiliated. They could not turn his cry back upon him but found that they themselves had been wounded by it. Not all of them understood the words he spoke, but none of them could miss the utter dereliction, the impenetrable loneliness which his cry expressed. And strangely, though they stood in a crowd, each of them felt claimed by that loneliness too.

Up to this point in the drama, it was the man on the cross who seemed oddly out of character. But now the crowd found itself doing oddly uncharacteristic things. After that almost unhuman, intensely penetrating cry, the man on that central cross spoke another word, and this time an almost embarrassingly human word. He said, "I thirst." Ordinarily that would have served to increase the perverse pleasure of the crowd. Thirst was one of the most common, most agonizing aspects of crucifixion, tortured as the condemned man was by the wounds inflicted upon him by his torturers, and exposed as he was to the merciless heat of that burned-out land. Thirst was a sign that the crucifixion was proceeding in normal satisfactory fashion. But the response of the crowd showed no satisfaction, and their reaction was anything but normal. One of them seized a sponge and soaked it in a vinegar brew which was the common drink of Rome's soldiers. And placing it on a long reed, they raised that sponge of compassion and mercy to the lips of the thirsting man on the cross! Nor did any man come forward from the crowd to knock that reed of mercy from his mouth, but all looked on in unbelievable consent.

And then the drama of death moved suddenly, almost unexpectedly to its climax as this third scene changed to the fourth. To be sure, it was not climax in the way one might ordinarily expect. There was no thundering conclusion, no final, death-defying exertion from the condemned man. The power of it lay in its simplicity, and its emphatic nature was in its understatement. "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said,

'It is finished.' " The crowd was stunned, not by the words but by their incredible import. It could scarcely imagine a man being in such complete possession of himself that he could lay down his life as simply and as matter-of-factly as that. It displayed a courage in the captive which condemned his captors.

And then he spoke again, and this time it was his last word. But in that final word was the clue to all his other words. " 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit': and having said thus, he gave up the ghost." Then this was the source of his serenity, and the clue to his compassion, the answer to his dereliction.

But if there was serenity for the man who had died, there was none for those who were still very much alive in that crowd about the cross. For them there is deep trouble of spirit.

Well, so that is that. The man is dead, and the sordid spectacle is over. Now the crowd will climb back down the Hill of the Skull as they came. There is a brooding discontent over their descent into the city. They are troubled, and they do not yet know how to ease their trouble. The drama of death is done, and yet it seems somehow incomplete.

Their eyes are cast down at the path. So it is not surprising that they have not seen a brightening of the sky toward the Sabbath morning which is ahead.

Thoughts on Preaching

✚ THE OBJECT of preaching, is, constantly to remind mankind of what they are constantly forgetting; not to supply the defects of human intelligence, but to fortify the feebleness of human resolutions; to recall mankind from the bypaths where they turn into that broad path of salvation which all know, but few tread. — *Sidney Smith*

✚ BORROWING dulls the edge of husbandry. — *Shakespeare*

✚ COME, give us a taste of your quality; come, a passionate speech. — *Shakespeare*

✚ THE EFFECT of a parade of sonorous phrases upon human conduct has never been adequately studied. — *Thurman W. Arnold*

✚ MEND your speech a little, lest it mar your fortune. — *Shakespeare*

✚ PREACHING is like shooting quail. If you aim for all the birds, you hit none, but if you aim for one, you are likely to get several. — *Henry Ward Beecher*

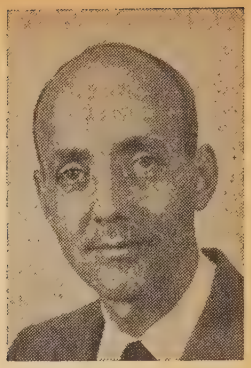
✚ AND several thoughts on preaching from Bernard of Clairvaux, a preacher of such imaginative powers that he left behind him the manuscripts of 86 sermons drawn from the first three chapters of the Song of Solomon. Obviously he imported many ideas to those chapters and allegorized freely, but who of us dares use that book today? Some of his thoughts follow:

"The learned pastor, who is not himself a good man, it is to be feared will not benefit as many by the richness of his instruction as he will injure by the sterility of his life."

"A mind occupied with external desires will not glow with the fire of Divine love; and no words will avail to inspire hearers to celestial desire, which proceed from a cold heart. Nothing which does not burn itself can kindle flame in anything else."

"I hear gladly the words of a teacher who does not stir applause for himself, but self-reproach in me."

"A sterile modesty is never pleasing, nor is a humility which surpasses the truth of things. Therefore attend to your duty. Expel bashfulness by regard to that duty; act as a master. Prepare to account for the single talent credited to thee; be easy in mind concerning anything beyond. If you have received much, give much. If little, contribute that. For he who is not faithful in the little, is not faithful in the much. Remember, too, to give to your word the voice of a noble virtue. Do you say, What is that? It is that your works chime with your words, or rather your words with your works, so that you take care to do before you teach . . . Indeed a sermon, living and efficacious, is an example of good work, making easily persuasive what is said, while it demonstrates that that can be done which is recommended. Therefore, on these two commandments, of word and example, understand the whole quietness of your conscience in regard to your duty to depend. Yet, if you are wise, you will add a third, a zeal for prayer. These three abide: the word, the example, prayer; but the greatest of these is prayer. For though, as I have said, work is the true virtue of the word, yet for both work and word prayer gains grace and efficacy."



The People's Choice

By John R. Bodo

Matthew 21: 1-11 and 27: 15-23.

SOME time ago a large group of high school students were polled concerning their ambitions. One of the questions was, "Which of these would you most like to be: good-looking, rich, powerful, smart, or popular?" By a large majority, the boys and girls wanted to be popular above all else.

Popularity ranks high among people's ambitions in our culture. We want to be "liked." We will do almost anything to make sure that we are liked. We are greatly dependent on the appreciation of our fellowmen. Whether in politics or as private citizens, we all want to be "the people's choice."

Jesus was as human in this respect as in all other respects. He was gracious, sociable, deeply responsive to friendship. One of the finest insights into his nature is recorded in the story of his encounter with the "rich young ruler." "Jesus, looking upon him, loved him." He loved people, and he wanted people to return his love.

The first thing Jesus learned was that whenever a man tries to stand for something, people will find some excuse to reject him. This was a hard lesson to learn, because in all his ministry he had only one objective — to reveal the love of God by telling people about him and by doing good to them in his name. Before long, however, he found out that his work was not any more popular than John the Baptist's had been. At first this struck him as strange. Was not his approach the exact opposite of John's? Was he not as tender as John had been harsh? Then, suddenly, it all became clear to him. "To what shall I compare this generation?" he asked. "It is like children sitting in the market place and calling to their playmates, 'We piped to you and you did not dance; we wailed and you did not mourn.' For John came, neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' "

Clearly, these were excuses. The people were at first intrigued by John's eccentricities. They flocked to hear him. He was a grand show. He bawled them out, and we all love to be bawled out in safe, general terms. John never got into trouble until his preaching became specific. Then, when he began to suggest that abstract repentance had to be followed by concrete actions, his popularity began to wane. The same people who had listened raptly to his shouting, suddenly found that his accent was guttural and that his voice was grating on their ears. "He is a fine preacher," they said, turning to go, "but I just cannot stand his manner."

Jesus had the same experience. At first people came in droves to hear him, because he spoke of deliverance and peace and joy. We all like to be comforted and given fresh hope. Then he began to be more specific. His criticisms of the prevailing religious and moral standards grew a personal edge directed at the vested interests. At the same time he was showing a decided preference for socially unacceptable persons. "He is a fine preacher," people said, turning to go, "but he runs around with the wrong crowd, and I don't want to get into trouble."

Jesus could have been popular with everybody. If anyone had the gift, he did. He could have confined himself to lively generalities and maintained in all controversial matters a neutrality so deceptively subtle that all factions would have counted him as one of their number. If his desire for popularity had been the chief goal of his life, he could have attained it. But Jesus had a mission to fulfill. He stood for something. And we cannot be popular with everybody, if we stand for something.

The second thing Jesus learned was that if a man tries to obey God, he cannot afford to trust

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his own popularity even with his loyal followers. By the time he was entering Jerusalem, the lines were clearly drawn, though the time of the showdown was still a matter of conjecture. The people who had cast their lot with Jesus were not of the religious or social élite. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea had too much to lose. The disinherited, on the other hand, had little to lose and a great deal to gain. The Palm Sunday crowd was composed of humble, hopeful men and women who saw in Jesus the embodiment of the Promise for which they had pined so long — the Messiah, come to deliver them from oppression and poverty. Clearly, so far as they were concerned, Jesus was the "people's choice."

But they were only a few of the people. We often think of the Triumphal Entry in terms of the ovation given to a returning hero along Fifth Avenue. The streets are lined with wildly cheering people, more or less restrained by happy but dutiful policemen. At last the hero's car passes. The shouts are deafening, while the hero glows and beams and waves his arms in happy acknowledgment of the people's devotion.

But nothing could be more misleading than such an image of Palm Sunday. The crowds were big, to be sure, but the crowd that knew and welcomed Jesus was small. There was no display except for a donkey, some tattered coats from the sturdy backs of the poor, and palm branches, provided *gratis* by nature's God.

But the most startling thing about the procession was the face of Jesus. Instead of rejoicing over his popularity, his face was bathed in tears. Jesus wept, openly, shamelessly. He wept when he should have been happiest; and his friends wondered. But he had his reasons. For one thing, he was looking at Jerusalem, the city he loved and longed to save, the city that would not be saved. He was also looking at his enemies whom he loved with his superhuman capacity for forgiveness, and the tragedy of their sin wrung tears from his heart.

Above all, however, he was looking at his friends and listening to their hosannas. They loved him. He was their hero. He was at the peak of his popularity with them. But did they understand him? Did they really believe that his kingdom was not of this world when all they wanted was an earthly king, a second David, to rid them of the Romans and to assure them security and plenty for all time? Did they really think that even these earthbound hopes could be realized without sacrifice? Did they have an inkling of the Hope God had set in their midst or of the price of this Hope? Did any of them see, as Jesus did, beyond the Temple and the Roman fortress, the hill called Golgotha?

The third thing Jesus learned was that popularity in God's cause is, at best, an anomaly — a temporary quirk of fate — since being popular and obeying God are mutually contradictory. The cause of God may at times appear to be the popular cause, but only accidentally, through misrepresentation. What Jesus only surmised on Palm Sunday, he was destined to have seared into his soul on that Friday which is so paradoxically called "Good." There he learned the final lesson about popularity as well as the supreme lesson of obedience to God.

On Good Friday in Pilate's hall two men were being tried in the people's court. Oddly and perhaps prophetically both of them were called Jesus: Jesus-bar-Joseph, "The son of Joseph," and Jesus-bar-Abbas. The people had to choose between the Jesus whose kingdom was a spiritual kingdom where forgiveness ruled, and the other Jesus, the patriot, who promised the restoration of Israel through bloodshed. There were hundreds of jurymen, and the verdict was to be by acclamation.

"Whom do you want me to release for you," Pilate said, "Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ? . . . Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified." And he said, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"

Jesus stood on that balcony, beaten and bleeding, but he could see more than just a blur of faces and hear more than the roar of a crowd. His gaze wandered from one familiar face to another, for he was looking at his Palm Sunday friends and he could hear their voices just as individually as an experienced conductor can hear any single instrument of the orchestra. This was not just a staged performance. It was *vox populi,* for now Barabbas was the man of the day, the people's choice.

As for Jesus, he chose the cross. It was not a popular thing. It was not a pretty thing, gilded and churched. It was two planks nailed together, with some nails left over. Resting on these nails for three hours, Jesus had time to reflect on his choice. Strangely enough, he had no regrets. He remembered the innocent, joyous hosannas of the children. In front of him he saw John, the only disciple who had not run away. He saw his mother, too, who had never understood him but had borne with him with constant, anxious devotion. These were left to him . . . and God. "Father," he prayed, "forgive them." And again, with his last breath, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!"

We all want to be popular. Jesus did, too. But there was something he wanted more than popularity. He wanted to do God's will. It was not a matter of just one big decision. It never is. Obedience to God is a matter of countless little decisions, day by day, and every time there is an alternative, an easier way, a more popular way. Without a martyr complex, without wearing a chip on our

shoulders, we must resolve quite simply to do the hard, costly thing rather than the popular thing, and to entrust the outcome to God, even if it turns out to be a cross.

When Lincoln lay dying, he was the most controversial man of his age, hated by half a nation, largely misunderstood by the other half. When he breathed his last, Edwin Stanton was heard to whisper reverently, "Now he belongs to the ages." He meant, of course, that history would vindicate him; and it has.

It would be tempting to believe that Jesus, too, has been vindicated by history. His apparent popularity, with perhaps a million churches dedicated to him, seems to point that way. Actually, his "popularity" today may be as deceptive as it was during his lifetime. In Jerusalem — the poet reminds us — he was at least considered dangerous enough to be crucified. If he came today — in the flesh — to your community or mine, he would probably be ignored as a harmless lunatic. His followers might not even rate a storefront. No, in spite of the apparent "success" of the institution which bears his name, he would not be popular — nor would he care to be. For he does not need the vindication of history. The God of history has vindicated him. Nor does he belong to the ages. The ages belong to him.

THE MOURNERS BENCH

By G. Hobab Kish

A MAN'S dreams are not very interesting to another man unless he is a psychiatrist. The fellow who corners you and then proceeds to tell you of a long and involved dream is not my idea of a brilliant conversationalist. Dreams reveal a good deal about a man's subconscious, for all I know. Freud and Havelock Ellis held forth at some length on the sexual significance of these sleep adventures, but I still say that usually they are dull. Now let me tell you about a dream I had the other night.

I dreamed that all the Protestant churches in the United States became one organic union. Everybody rejoiced and there seemed to be a general assumption that our chief problem had been solved. Nobody beat his breast on Wednesday for the sin of our divisions and then insisted on Sunday that only certain Christians could be allowed at the Lord's Table. Not a single prophet thundered his denunciations against our differences on Thursday and then proclaimed a narrow creed on Sunday. No one questioned another denomination's ministry or argued about who or what constitutes the true church. Peace! It was wonderful.

Then the dream changed and a cold wind began to blow. This big institution had twenty times as much machinery as any minister had been caught in before. That meant, of course, thirty times as many committee meetings. The boards increased at an alarming rate and all of them began to flood the preachers with their literature. Mailmen with more than one church on their routes, went on strike. Church secretaries were not employed on the basis of their personalities and skills but according to their ability to lug tons of mimeographed stuff about the office.

Protestants with their traditional distrust of authority, sought to conduct the business through traditional methods. There were conferences, assemblies, workshops, institutes. The trouble was that everybody spent so much time not offending others and making sure they were not being offended by others that nothing could be done. Some of the optimistic brethren who had been preaching this union for years, sweetly counseled patience and said this was a temporary price well worth paying for union. In the meantime, nothing was accomplished.

But the main difficulty was an increasing tension which became more apparent with every passing month. The Low Church boys were put out with the High Church fellows. The liturgical experts made some snide remarks about the Quaker-inclined worshipers. While this had been a problem before union, with only one church there was no place to go. It was like a family that had enjoyed one another on Christmas but was now forced to live all year in one house. Those traits which had appeared just a little eccentric and interesting now became downright irritating.

Then a strange thing was observed. The stimulation of godly competition was gone and nobody cared much about keeping alert to the need for extension and growth. Somehow, it seemed less important. The vitality of the Baptists no longer troubled the Methodists. The witness of the Presbyterians was not now a challenge to the Episcopalians. Everybody was at ease and the church consoled itself with vague references to quality instead of quantity, as if the two were antithetical. And then there was talk about a revolution brewing and the threat of a splinter group considering going its own way again.

It was at this point that Mrs. Kish poked me awake and said, "What kind of a nightmare were you having? You were groaning as if you were in mortal anguish." I smiled happily and mumbled: "I was, my dear. Thank you for waking me up."

Christian Scribes

By Ilion T. Jones

"Have you understood all this?" They said to him, "Yes." And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."
Matthew 13:51-52.

THIS is the last of eight parables recorded in Matthew 13 which were spoken by Jesus to his followers for the purpose of preparing them to go forth and proclaim his gospel to the world. It explains the purpose of the other parables and constitutes a conclusion to them. "Have you understood all this?" Jesus asked. When they declared, "Yes, we understand what you have been saying," he spoke this parable. In effect it says, "If you really understand all that I have been saying you can now consider yourselves scribes trained to work for the Kingdom."

The use of the word "scribe" by the Master must have startled or even confused his hearers. Jewish scribes were trained to study, expound, interpret, apply and transmit the written and unwritten traditions of their people. We can almost hear the people that day saying to Jesus, "Have you not been telling us over and over that these traditions which they guard are now outmoded, no longer worthy of observance, to be discarded as unnecessary by those who are entering the new age you keep talking about? And now, after all that you have said by way of condemnation and criticism of the scribes, you call us scribes!" Undoubtedly Jesus was aware that some such thoughts were going through their minds. So his use of the word "scribe" in this connection has more significance than appears on the surface. When considered in connection with what he had said upon other occasions, notably in the Sermon on the Mount, about the law of which the scribes were the custodians, the import of the use of the word here may be stated fairly, I think, somewhat like this:

> I *have* criticised the scribes for looking backward, for living in the past, for overlooking many of the basic truths in their traditions, for closing their minds to what God is doing now. But those traditions are not to be lightly discarded. They contain sacred truths of inestimable value which must be preserved and which you must help preserve. They have prepared the way for the new gospel I am proclaiming for the new era. You are not to be like the Jewish scribes I have criticised. But you *are*, nevertheless, to be scribes of a sort. You are to find the truth in the past, lift it out of that past, separate it from the outgrown and erroneous, translate it into the language and life of this generation, add it to the new truth I have been teaching, and thus release it for creating the Kingdom of God. Both you and my future followers throughout your lives will be doing this same thing over and over. Therefore, consider yourselves to be Christian scribes who, like householders displaying their treasure, bring out what is old as well as what is new.

This parable speaks pointedly to us here. A theological seminary is composed of those who are supposed to be trained, or in process of being trained, to be scribes for the Kingdom. Our job, professors and students alike, is to teach the old and the new: both . . . and, not either . . . . or. Like our Master we must be both conservatives and liberals simultaneously. We must let go the old that ages in order to hold fast to the old that never ages.

It is a grievous mistake to say that Jesus threw out all the traditions of his Jewish upbringing. Jewish scholars have shown that practically everything attributed to Jesus in the Gospels can be found somewhere in the traditions of the Jewish people written before he was born. He was a Jew through and through, as were also his early followers who were responsible for producing what we now speak of as the Christian Scriptures. No one in any age can grasp the true meaning of the gospel of Jesus without coming to it through the Scriptures of the ancient Jews. The clue to the understanding of both the mission and the message of Jesus is found in those Scriptures. Indeed, John Knox, the New Testament scholar, goes so far as to say that the "event of Christ is inconceivable in

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ILION T. JONES, *professor of practical theology at San Francisco Theological Seminary until his retirement last June, is the author of* A Protestant Speaks His Mind *(Westminster, 1960).*

In this sermon one who calls himself an older liberal issues a challenge to the younger ministers of our day.

any connection other than the Jewish culture and in the course of Jewish history. Located anywhere else it would have been a profoundly different — indeed another — event." The originality of Jesus consisted of the way he used the Jewish traditions. He selected from them the permanent truths, gave them new interpretations, grouped them in new ways, explained them in new terms, and in so doing carried them so far beyond what anyone had previously done as to justify their being called new.

I once heard Prof. Robert A. Millikan, the noted scientist, give an illustrated lecture on atomic energy. The theme of his lecture was that the new is but the extension of the old. He began with the mathematical discoveries of Euclid, who lived about 300 B.C. He showed how these became the basis of further step-by-step advance until future scientists, building on the truths of former generations, discovered and then released the energy in the atom. After that he asked, "What has become of the mathematics of Euclid?" He answered his own question by saying that they are still true and still operative within the atom. What he said of scientific truths can also be said of religious truths. Once discovered a religious truth continues to be true and to operate in the lives of future generations who possess fuller and more extensive truth. In fact, it is only because older generations discovered some truths that new generations, building on them, can discover new truths.

So, even Christ did not miraculously spring full-grown from the hand of God. "In the fullness of time," when God had hammered many great truths out on the anvil of the experiences of many generations of his people, and thus made them ready to be utilized by Christ, then and only then was the time ripe for Christ's coming. As Dr. Fosdick once said, "Christ was rooted in the past, but he was not imprisoned there." The old truths of the past became the matrix of larger truths of the future.

It is also a serious error for Christ's followers to imagine that they are supposed to discard past religious truths and start out anew in each generation to build his Kingdom. And yet, unfortunately, many in our own age seem to conceive such to be their role. A young college student is quoted as having said, "I have come to the conclusion that the thing for me to do is to clear the universe of God and start in at the beginning to see what I can find." Some young theologians seem to have made the same decision. In the first place such people could not start *de novo* if they wanted to. They have already been partly fashioned by what others discovered before them. But suppose they could start at the beginning, how far could they get in four years, or in ten years, or in a hundred years by starting out strictly on their own to see what they could find? About as far as the old Stone Age or the cave man. No one lives widely enough or long enough to discover all truth by his own experiments and experiences. And anyway, as Robert Flint, the philosopher, said, "If we hadn't inherited certain things we have no assurance that we would have found them out for ourselves." We need much truth before we have opportunity to discover it for ourselves, even if we would make full use of the opportunities of our little lives. No man can be an educated man who is merely a creation of his own times. To throw aside the past is to be forever a child, an immature mind. All of this, of course, is as true in our special field of religion as it is in other fields of human culture.

In an address to the graduating class at Harvard University some years ago Walter Lippmann, the sage columnist, said that the world enters its dark ages, civilizations collapse, because "we are unable to transmit the human heritage unimpaired in its full vitality from ancient times to the present day so that no skill is lost and none of the lessons of experience forgotten." He went on to say that if we had found a way to do this, "the compound wisdom of mankind would have produced a civilization so splendid as to surpass our ability to imagine it. But again and again the tradition of the good life has become dim and has been interrupted, and then it has had laboriously to be rediscovered and realized and learned once more." That word "compounded" refers to interest on money: money earning interest, then interest itself invested to earn still more interest. Think of what *compounded wisdom* could do!

But no, the new generation each time rashly throws old wisdom to the winds and tries to prove all previous generations wrong. So old truths have to be rediscovered at great loss of time and energy, all of which is true in the field of religion. Ernest Renan, the noted French scholar said, sometime before his death in 1892, "I predict that the 20th century will spend a great deal of its time picking out of the wastebasket things which the 19th century threw into it." He did his own share of throwing things into the discard, because he was a noted skeptic. Alas, our century at periods *has* spent a great deal of time picking up what this or that group of the previous century threw away. On the basis of my own experience I can say that every person before his life has been spent picks out of his own private wastebasket things he had previously put into it. And in some instances he will hold up what he picked out of the discard saying, "Look what new thing I have found!"

This human failing is nonetheless tragic because it is almost universal. What a wasteful, pathetically wasteful, procedure! Is there no way to break this foolish and costly cycle? Perhaps not, but it is surely our function as Christian leaders to try. Our task is to strive to remedy the situation so far as possible by bringing out of our treasures things that are new and things that are old. As

Christian leaders we are supposed to hold fast to the old truths committed to us while we utilize them to discover new truths, and utilize both toward a continual spiritual regeneration of the world in which we live.

Many of the older liberal Protestant ministers are more than perplexed by the current trends in theological circles: they are apprehensive. Throughout their ministry, and at the cost of not a little "blood, sweat and tears," they have stood for the regular reformation of our Christian faith; for its translation into the vernacular or thought forms of each new generation; for making it relevant to the changing and increasingly complex social situations of our culture; for keeping, or trying always to keep, open to the leadings of the Holy Spirit into new paths. Now to their dismay a new liberalism has appeared in which many of the teachings they have conceived to be basic to the Christian faith are being cast aside as hopelessly outgrown and intellectually untenable.

These older liberals engaged in debate with the nontheists and atheists over the concept of God. They came out with the conviction that the theistic view is reasonable, intellectually respectable and essential for an understanding of how the universe originated and how it continues to operate. They stood for the idea of a God who is real and personal in some mysterious manner beyond our comprehension, who is in charge of the universe and of our little world and is working out his wise and beneficent purposes to some unimaginatively magnificent end. On this solid theistic faith they formulated and practiced their beliefs in the validity of the religious experience, of corporate worship, of private prayer and the devotional life, and of belief in the providence of God in individual and group life and in history.

Generally speaking, the older liberals accepted the findings of the biblical scholars and interpreted the Bible on the principles of literary and historical criticism. But this approach served only to stimulate them the more enthusiastically to teach and preach it as the revealed and inspired Word of God. Likewise they compared Christianity theologically, philosophically, historically and sociologically with other religions. And they emerged from the comparison with a profound belief that in Christ God had revealed that ultimate and final religious truth about himself, about man, about the world, about the ideal society on earth, which people who believed in other systems of religious thought were seeking and finding in less advanced and mature forms. They willingly and fearlessly engaged in conversations with those who study morals and ethics from the historical viewpoint. Again they came out with the belief that New Testament Christianity, when formulated into a system and implemented in personal and group life, contains the principles and ideals of morals and ethics that are the basis of the good life for all men in all situations in all ages. They believed that man is divinely endowed with freedom and responsibility of choices and therefore capable of co-operating with God for the achievement of his moral and ethical goals for the human race.

The contemporary liberalism which is rapidly permeating the religious thought in university circles and in theological seminaries is of another type. Nearly everything which the older liberals have zealously defended and proclaimed is, by one new liberal or another, questioned, discarded, often with sarcasm and, in some instances, ridiculed. Belief in a personal God is displaced by a view that leaves theism itself in question, that is loosely attached to the biblical records, and that describes God in technical terms that are beyond the understanding of all but the theological elite. Within this system there is little room for a warm, vital, mystical experience of God in prayer and in the devotional life. These things, often spoken of as a misnamed "spiritual" life, are in some circles entirely tabooed.

For the older ethics there is now being substituted a new system of "contextual" ethics in which there are no moral absolutes or eternal ethical principles, no Christian acts but only situations in which people strive to decide what a Christian should do under the circumstances. The old ideas of redemption in and from the world and the salvation of the soul in another world are regarded as outmoded. Now men are encouraged to believe that there is no such entity as a soul, and no bodiless existence beyond death, and to make the most of their physical existence in this world. They are exhorted to express and exploit all aspects of their bodily — physical, instinctive, glandular — existence to the full. They are encouraged to believe that they are unable to control their natural desires, and that they should not feel guilty about or think of themselves as being held morally accountable for actions they cannot help. To put forth an effort to be good, or to set high so-called Christian moral standards for themselves and strive by self-disciplining to achieve them, is castigated as sheer moralism, puritanical legalism, hypocritical pietism, pharisaical self-righteousness.

It would be unjust to charge that all contemporary Christian liberals hold to all of these extreme views. But to one degree or another these positions have been stated publicly by, and expressed in publications of, so many leading and lesser theologians alike that they arouse grave apprehension in the minds of older liberals about where all this is leading us. For these views are reflected in the careless and irresponsible moral, ethical and spiritual life of the present generation of theological students.

What has all this to do with the parable under consideration? We are to suppose that Jesus directed this parable to his followers who were mani-

esting a tendency to interpret his gospel as a plea o throw into the scrap heap all the truths of their Jewish heritage. Those of us who are disposed to nterpret his gospel in a similar manner in our day should force ourselves to sit down a few times each year and change what Jesus said in Matthew 5:17ff. about the law and the prophets — the ancient traditions of his day — so that they will apply to the Christian traditions that we have inherited from the past. If we should do this, what Jesus said would read somewhat like this:

> Think not that I have come to abolish all the traditions of your Christian heritage. I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I say to you not an iota, not a dot — not the smallest vowel or final consonant of a single word — will pass from the traditions until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of our Christian truths and teaches men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. For I tell you, unless your teaching, preaching and living of the Christian traditions exceed those of other Christian leaders whom you so severely criticise and chastise, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

I believe I could speak with some assurance for a large segment of the older generation now approaching the end of their active ministry when I say to the younger generation: "Take the truths we have tried to teach to our generation, dress them in new terms, improve on them, correct them, add to them, but don't discard or belittle them. Begin where we are leaving off. Build on what we pass on to you, somewhat improved, we hope, from the way we received it from others. We do not ask you to take the ashes from the sacred altars of past generations. But we do beseech you by the mercies of God, don't put out the fire."

A Stone's Throw

"And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw . . ." (Luke 22:41)

Go forward, black child,
As far as the school door,
About a stone's throw,
A step, one more.
Beyond the trajectory of flung hate
Firmly tread,
Till the large marble arches
Swing over your head.
See, the door shrinks to child-size;
How narrow the gate!
The pillars diminish.
Outside where they wait,
The scoffers and those who
A child would waylay,
Where the angry mob gathers,
How broad is the way!

EDITH LOVEJOY PIERCE

Prayers

Strength for Holy Living

GREAT art thou, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are filled with thy glory. Thy majesty is seen clearest in thy mercy and thy goodness best in thy forgiveness. We would worship thee today. As we confess our sins we are sure that through Christ thou dost remember them no more. As our need for redemption is great, so thy supply is infinite. We implore thee for grace to go out and live righteously, for penitence and confession is of no avail unless we determine to live in holiness. So may our lives be acceptable in thy sight and before our fellows, O Lord our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

When Disaster Strikes

GOD of every mercy, when disaster strikes keep us from the childish reaction of questioning thy wisdom, thy goodness or thy power. All of life has its hazards that bear no relation to thy concern except that we grow in manhood and understanding. Thou dost not wish for thy children beds of ease or rosy paths but sterling character and high purpose. In the very struggle that accompanies wind and wave, sickness or tragedy, strength beyond known abilities comes from thee. So Lord in sorrow as well as joy, in trial as in triumph, may we see thy high purpose. This we pray in the spirit of the prophets, seers and saints who felt closest to thee in their tribulations. Amen.

Love That Transforms

O THOU perfect Love at the heart of the universe, teach us to be loving too. There is so much of agony and selfishness in the world, to which we confess we have added our part: forgive us, O God. Men need compassion; men need understanding; men need love. In thine outgoing love that accepts us while we are still in our sins, and that then transforms us into sons of the Most High, may we see the hope for reconciliation between men and nations. We pray in the name and spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose death we see perfect love and infinite forgiveness and in whose glorious resurrection there is full evidence of a power which will not let such things pass into nothingness. Amen. — *Hillyer H. Straton, First Baptist Church, Malden, Massachusetts.*

Preaching Is Important

By Wallace Fridy

IAN Maclaren once said, "The most critical and influential event in the religious week is the sermon." If this be so, and I believe it is, then we should approach its preparation with a keen sense of responsibility. It is a matter that should not be taken lightly. It is part of our task which should be given major concern. It should call for more than the remnants of time and the leftovers of physical energy. It should be in the forefront of all our planning and labors. Dean Charles R. Brown declared: "The making and delivery of an effective sermon is not only the most conspicuous but the most effective single service the minister is privileged to render in the whole round of the week's activity."

Why is preaching so important?

In the first place, it is important because of the message we are ordained to declare. It is the good news, as James S. Stewart puts it, "that God has invaded history with power; that in the Cross the supreme triumph of naked evil has been turned once and for all to irrevocable defeat; that Christ is alive now and present through His spirit; that through the risen Christ there has been let loose into the world a force which can transform life beyond recognition. This is the most momentous message that human lips were ever charged to speak."[1]

It is a message that nothing is too good to believe about God. It is a message that though we go through the valley of the shadow of life's gruelling experiences someone is always standing by. And if we examine the pages of the New Testament, we will discover that the gospel — which is the good news about Christ — claimed authority for itself. It was preached by the apostles not as a means to an end, but for its own sake. It was based on a unique, final, and absolute authority. It had an absolute claim.

The claim of the gospel is that God has spoken supremely, once and for all, in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. It is a claim today as in the days of old that a spiritually defeated world can know that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." It is a claim that men can be sons of God and can pass the ordinary level of biological human existence into a new dimension of life, from being "born of the flesh" to being "born of the spirit." It is a claim that this cannot be done by man's own efforts; but that God through Christ has reached down to man and can lift him to new dimensions of living. It is a claim that in Christ the new age has arrived. It is a claim that God makes upon man to make a decision — to accept him or to reject him. This claim is authoritative.

In the second place, it is important because the message is to be conveyed to men by messengers. The gospel is the story of the personal encounter between God and man. That message can best be given with real insight through a person. So, not only the message but the messenger makes it important. Phillips Brooks was thinking of this when he wrote: "All truth must be brought, in order to be effective, through a personal medium. Which of us can dare to say that he would hold the most effective truths that he believes in just as much and just in the same way as he does now, if they had come to him anonymously? . . . We have some personality behind them all; a mother's voice yet trembles in them, a father's authority makes them solemn, a teacher's enthusiasm will not let us count them trivial, and so they first have gained and so they still hold their great power over us." This is why he concludes that "nothing can take the place of preaching because of the personal element that is in it. . . . To live in Christ and to be His and not our own, makes preaching a perpetual privilege and joy."

Our relationship to the message we are ordained to declare has for us deep ethical undertones and implications. The very act of proclaiming this gospel becomes part of this gospel. In other words, we become part of the redeeming message we declare. P. T. Forsyth maintains that preaching is far more than the declaration of the gospel. "It is the Gospel prolonging and declaring itself." He says that "the Gospel is an act of God. Its preaching must therefore be an act, a 'function' of the great act. A true sermon is a real deed."

This all means then that to preach the gospel is not merely to say words but to effect a deed. In the words of Donald G. Miller: "To preach is not merely to stand in a pulpit and speak, no matter how eloquently and effectively, nor even to set forth a theology, no matter how clearly stated nor how worthy the theology. To preach is to become a part of a dynamic event wherein the living, redeeming God reproduces his act of redemption in a living encounter with men through a preacher. True preaching is an extension of the Incarnation into the contemporary moment, the transfiguring of the Cross and Resurrection from ancient facts of a remote past into living realities of the present. A sermon is an act wherein the crucified, risen Lord personally confronts men either to save or to judge them."[2]

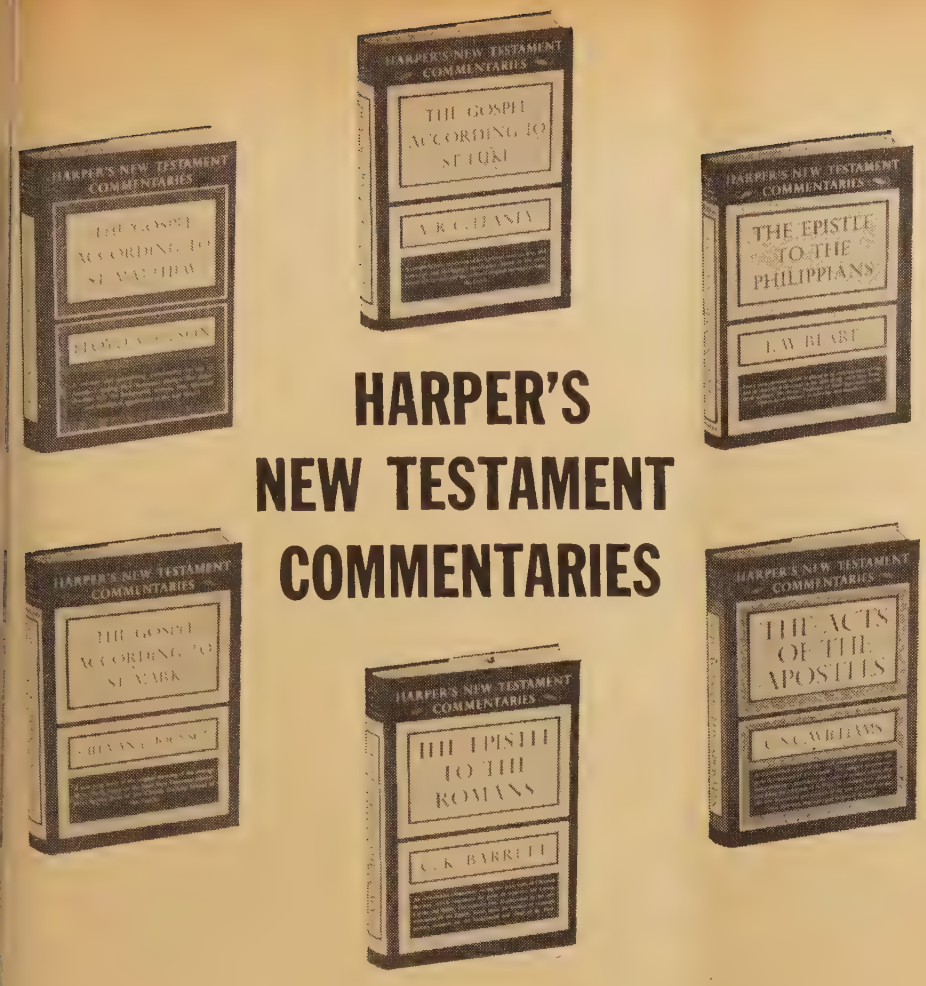
"The preaching of the Cross," said Forsyth, "is part of the action of the Cross." The words of the Cross "really the Cross's own energy, the Cross in action. . . . The real presence of Christ crucified is what makes preaching. It is what makes a speech a sermon, and of a sermon Gospel." This all means that there can be no activity in the world more important than preaching, and no calling higher than the ministry. Miller states it like this: "To think that the redemptive Deed of God is to be brought to a focus in one's life as he stands before men in the act of preaching; that the yearning agony of the Redeemer is to leap

[1] James S. Stewart, *Heralds of God* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946). Used by permission.

[2] Donald G. Miller, *Fire in Thy Mouth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1954). Used by permission.

WALLACE FRIDY, *pastor of Washington Street Methodist Church, Columbia, South Carolina, is the author of four books published by Abingdon Press:* A Lamp Unto My Feet *1952);* A Light Unto My Path *(1953);* Devotions for Adult Groups *(1956) and* Adults at Worship *(1959).*

This article on preaching was first presented as a part of a series of lectures given at a Duke University convocation and pastors' school.



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into actuality on the plane of history once more; that the turning point of destiny for some soul, or some congregation, or even a significant turning point in history may be reached as one humbly but passionately proclaims the Word of God — this is an overwhelming realization which makes every other activity pale into insignificance."[3]

In the third place, preaching is important because it is still the spiritual dynamo of the whole church program. When preaching lags, the church tends to lag. When it mounts up with wings as eagles, the church and its whole program begins to move. The central and focal hour of the week in the life of the church is that hour which calls together young and old, rich and poor in divine worship — a time when, together, a people lift their hearts in praise to God. It is a time that if consistently neglected will result in the disintegration and decline of the church. The preaching of the Word has been throughout the ages a molding and directing influence in the life of the church. If neglected by preacher in preparation or people in support, the life of the church will be seriously handicapped. The power of the pulpit is still a force and a potential force which must be guarded and enhanced by the church if she is to meet the needs of this hour. No preacher worthy of his calling should dare come consistently to his pulpit without being prepared in mind and heart, and no people worthy of the Christian heritage can afford consistently to neglect attendance at these hours.

Bishop Paul B. Kern said, "Going to church may be a habit but it is a means of grace which if persistently neglected results almost unfailingly in religious indifference and spiritual death. The church cannot maintain its program or accomplish its divine mission with empty pews."

Dean Brown went so far as to say that "the fate of Protestant Christianity is in my judgment bound up in large measure with the rise and fall of effective preaching. If you will read your church history, reading between the lines as well as along them, you will find it so."

In the fourth place, preaching is important because it has as its object the salvation of men's souls. Dr. Paul Scherer says that we are "preaching not to make clear what good preaching is or ought to be, but preaching to lay hold desperately on life, broken life, hurt life, soiled life, staggering life, helpless life, hard, cynical, indifferent, willful life, to lay hold on it with both hands in the high name of the Lord Christ and to lift it toward his dream."[4]

Of course the sermon is not an end within itself. It is not intended to be great; but rather to produce great Christians. Our is not the task of making "great preachers" of ourselves but through our labors helping to make great Christians of our people. Dean Brown says we can imagine ourselves standing before the Lord who is asking "Have you been preaching good sermons!" Our appropriate reply will not be "Look at my barrel," but rather "Look at my people." The sermon, however polished, however eloquent, misses the mark if it does not bring some definite results along the line. Our business, as another has well said, is not to lecture on botany but to raise flowers. And it is because the salvation of men's souls becomes the object that preaching is the most critical event during the religious week. So as James S. Stewart puts it: "Every Sunday morning when it comes ought to find you awed and thrilled by the reflection — 'God is to be in action today, through me, for these people: this day may be crucial, this service decisive, for someone now ripe for the vision of Jesus!' "[5]

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Paul Scherer, *For We Have This Treasure* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944). Used by permission.

[5] *Op cit.*

Book Reviews

PINNACLE OF FAITH. *By Brian Hession. Peter Davies, London. 16s.*

A WORKING FAITH. *By Joost De Blank. Eerdmans. $2.00.*

THE CHOICE IS ALWAYS OURS. *Edited by Dorothy B. Phillips, Elizabeth B. Howes, Lucille M. Nixon. Harper. $5.95.*

BRIAN Hession is the English clergyman who was stricken with cancer while on a lecture tour in the United States some six years ago. He survived a critical operation after many physicians said he could not live more than three days. His gallant fight against the disease has sharpened his insights and refined his spirit. This is reflected in the 30 inspirational essays in his latest book. These are informal, warmhearted, friendly messages on a variety of themes, such as "Courage," "Finding Out God's Will," "The Problem of the Unhealed," "The Little Things." They are fresh, pungent, easy to read, and deeply Christian without being preachy or sanctimonious. The overriding theme is that we find in God the power to scale the pinnacle, no matter how steep or sharp be the way. The author's recent personal experience gives validity to his words. There is a beautiful epilogue by Mrs. Hession on a wife's care and concern for her husband during his prolonged period of illness and suffering.

A Working Faith is a book of 15 short sermons delivered on various specified occasions, mostly in England, by the Anglican Archbishop of Capetown, South Africa. They are excellent examples of how one preacher brings the gospel message into sharp focus at special secular and church meetings. These include civic and educational celebrations, a service for the body that controls the lighthouses and lightships of England, and one for the Worshipful Company of Gardeners. Bishop De Blank speaks with vigor and courage in addressing himself to the issues of the day. He pulls no punches in four Advent sermons on secularism among church people. His sermon on "Reconciliation in South Africa" is at once forthright and compassionate. In a sermon on science he gets to the heart of the matter and shows that the Christian and the scientist need no longer walk out of step. He challenges the pessimists in a message which offers as the basis of our hope the nature of God, the love of God, and the intervention of God. The style throughout is lively, the insight penetrating, and the outlook forward-looking. There is much strong preaching in this slender volume.

The title of the third book, *The Choice Is Always Ours,* is taken from lines by Aldous Huxley. It is a poetic but somewhat unsatisfactory name for an anthology on something mysteriously called "the religious way." First published semi-privately in 1948, this revised edition contains about 500 selections, short and long, from writers, ancient and modern, in the fields of psychology, religion, philosophy, poetry, and biography. Very little material published since the 1948 edition has been added. The readings are arranged in sections to further what is called "spiritual progression." Part one explains the nature of the Way; part two indicates techniques for inner development; part three describes outcomes of the Way expressed in man's relations to society and to God. Thus, differing from the usual anthology, it is designed to move the reader along the Way straight to the Source of Life. The total is called "A Synthesis of Religious and Psychological Insight." Materials are from a wide variety of authors, such as Meister Eckhart, Paul Tillich, Karen Horney, Evelyn Underhill, Eric Fromm, Gerald Heard, Fritz Kunkel, Rufus Jones, John Woolman. The emphasis is mystical and psychical, fitting the Inner Light appeal of the Quaker tradition, rather than the evangelical Christian approach to man and his

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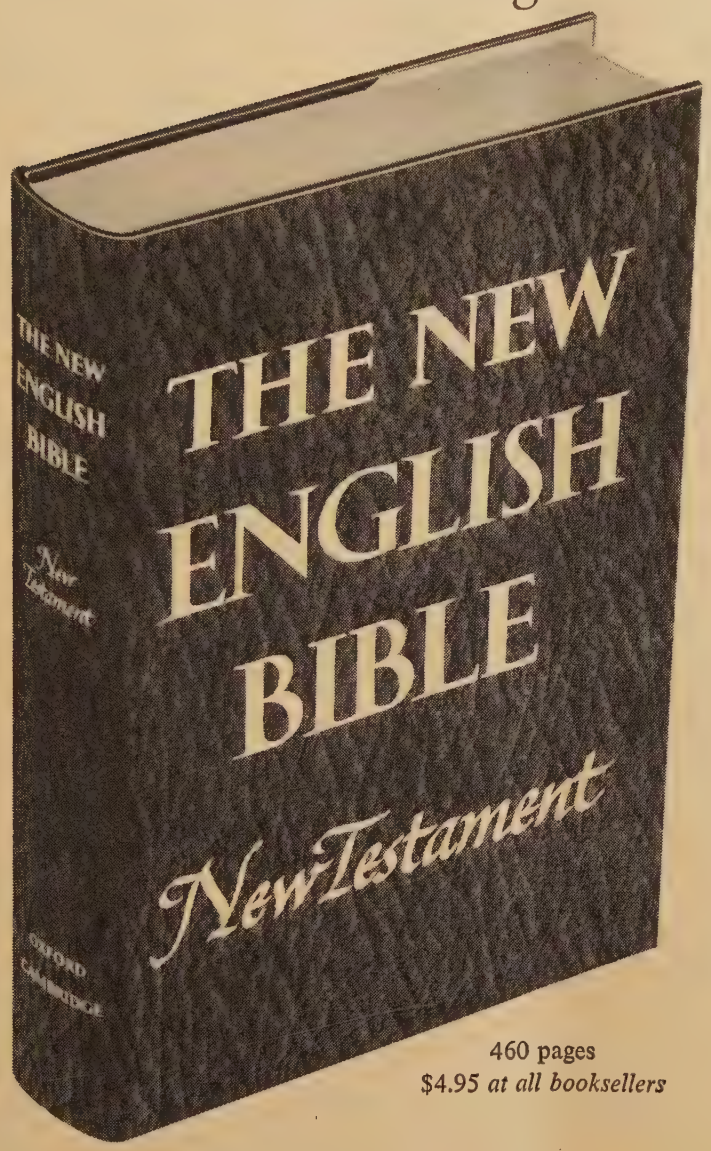

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BIBLICAL AUTHORITY FOR MODERN PREACHING. *By Charles W. F. Smith. Westminster. $3.50.*

AGENTS OF RECONCILIATION. *By Arnold B. Come. Westminster. $3.95.*

A HASTY reading may suggest that these two books are in conflict. The one magnifies the role of the preacher and calls him to a more biblical and liturgical approach to his task; the other is suspicious of the unique position assigned to the clergy and magnifies the responsibility of the whole church to serve as the agent of reconciliation for the entire world. These emphases may be harmonized by distinguishing, with Dr. Come, between the "church-directed ministry" and the "world-directed ministry," and by recognizing that *Agents of Reconciliation* is concerned primarily with the latter while *Biblical Authority for Modern Preaching* focuses on the role of the preacher within the established church. Yet such a harmonization may blur the significance of these two books and the intentions of their respective authors. Certainly it is more exciting to assume that Dr. Come, while agreeing with many of the positions taken in Dr. Smith's book on preaching, would suggest that it reflects the church's preoccupation with its communication to itself which he (Dr. Come) criticizes.

Biblical Authority for Modern Preaching is a competent statement of the case for preaching, and for biblical preaching, in the twentieth century. After an opening chapter describing the new factors in modern society which seem to militate against the effectiveness of preaching, the author affirms the necessity for preaching because of the nature of the Christian faith, i.e., a story to be told or proclaimed about events. The argument is valid but, to this reviewer, it does not seem adequate to establish the case for preaching in its traditional form. There is no consideration of drastically different procedures through which the gospel could be "proclaimed." Dr. Smith moves on to "The Ordering of Biblical Preaching," i.e., the question of a lectionary pattern for preaching. Those from non-liturgical traditions will recognize that the author has not made a fetish of the appointed sequence, but has presented a strong case for preaching based on a pattern other than that of caprice. The book emphasizes not only that there is biblical authority for the procedure of preaching but also that biblical authority must stand behind the content of the message preached. The preacher serves as the connecting link between the Book and the People. "The pastor who

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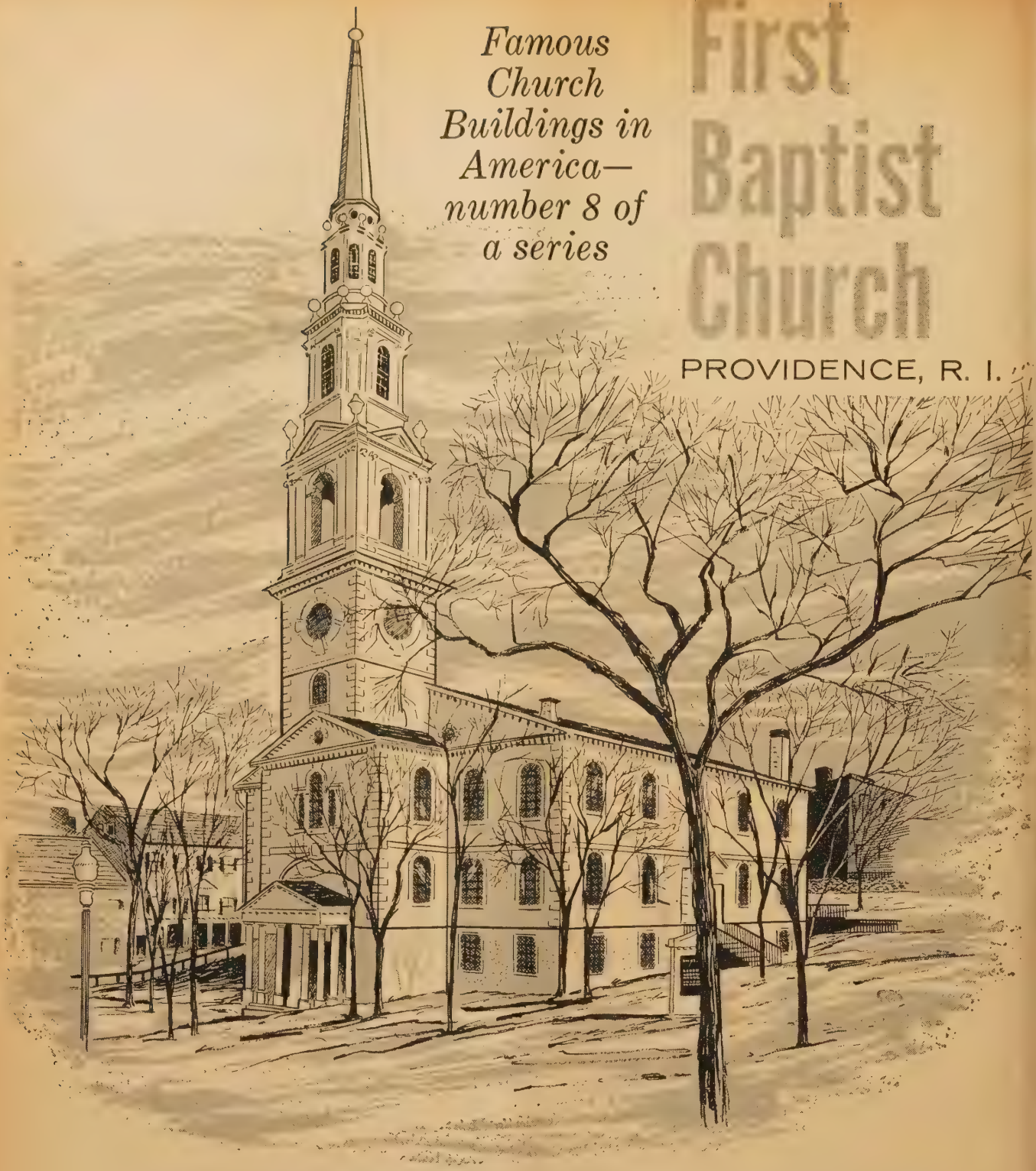

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tands between the needs of his people nd the demands of the 'given' bibli- al message has a sacred obligation o move back and forth between the wo. He can do it only as he develops he ability to analyze the human pre- dicament and to analyze the biblical material so that the one answers to he other" (p. 144). An "Epilogue" presents sermonic material illustrating he principles which have been enun- ciated. Without containing anything that is new or startling, this book will encourage ministers to rethink their task as proclaimers of the biblical faith.

Agents of Reconciliation is an ex- citing book because it is radical and controversial. The rediscovery of the church has created an awareness of the tension between the church and the world. But how are the two re- lated and what should the church be doing about the world? Dr. Come deals drastically with this problem. Few will challenge his contention that the church tends to become self-cen- tered and to forget that it exists as God's instrument for the reconcilia- tion of the whole world. Controversy will begin when he suggests that the effectiveness of the church in its world-directed ministry is not de- pendent on the number of converts obtained. "The ultimate goal of God's salvation and therefore the mis- sion of the church, clearly transcends the little handful of men that God has called together in the fellowship of Christ in the church. Surely this concrete historical phenomenon that we call the church, puny in size and poor in quality, is not the total prod- uct of God's great act of creation and salvation. This would be a perfect case of the proverbial mountain giv- ing birth to a mouse" (p. 123). Con- troversy will continue when Dr. Come asserts that the traditional clergy-laity distinction is an obstacle to the world- directed ministry since it encourages the laity to regard themselves as pas- sive recipients of knowledge and grace rather than as active "agents of recon- ciliation." "The church is now ready for, and its God-given mission now demands, *the complete abandonment of the clergy-laity distinction*" (p. 99). Those who have been stimulated by Dr. Come's contention will urge him to write yet another book defining more precisely what the visible struc- ture of the church should be after the abolition of the clergy-laity dis- tinction. It will also be helpful if he discusses further the nature and scope of the reconciliation which takes place outside the church but through the ministry of the church. The role of the laity has been dis- cussed during the last decade from many perspectives; for example, in the Roman Catholic work of Father Yves M. J. Congar, *Lay People in the Church,* and in Hendrik Kraemer's *A Theology of the Laity.* Dr. Come's book is a provocative continuation of that discussion which will receive thoughtful comment in the next few years.

Dr. Charles W. F. Smith is Edmund Swett Rousmaniere Professor of Lit- erature and Interpretation of the New Testament at Episcopal Theo- logical Seminary in Cambridge. Dr. Arnold B. Come is Stuart Professor of Systematic Theology at San Francisco Theological Seminary. — *Harvey K. McArthur, Hartford Theological Sem- inary, Hartford, Conn.*

THE SELF IN PILGRIMAGE. *By Earl A. Loomis, Jr. Harper. $3.00.*

LIKE many a reader of these pages, I have wearily trudged my way through a number of "religion and psychology" books only to find that most of them say about the same thing. The difference, if there be one, lies in the names of the personal examples, an occasional new word needing ex- tensive interpretation, or the arrange- ment of the chapter headings. Usually, I finish feeling a trifle cold. The people who come to me never seem to be able to state their problems quite as clearly as those in the examples of the books I read, and I am not as adept at the quick response as the author always seems to be.

All this unburdening of my frustra- tions is done to lift out but one of many reasons why I rejoice over the reading of *The Self in Pilgrimage.* There is very little in it of that which seems to have become the customary pattern of psychiatry and religion books. Instead, *The Self in Pilgrimage* performs a wedding of religious and psycho-dynamic insights, and does so with such clarity and illustrative word- ing that everyone can understand the ceremony.

Here is a book that starts where most of the others stop. Beginning with the frustrations that exist in the life of man as he seeks to look at himself, yet fears what he will see through self-examination, Dr. Earl A. Loomis, Jr. gives us a vivid and ex- tremely fresh approach to the move- ment of the self through time and en- vironment on this complicated journey called life. The vividness of Dr. Loomis' style of writing can be seen in one of his opening statements con- cerning the problem: " . . . the reason we refuse to search for our inner being is that we fear we shall find something *good.*" Then the fol- low-up, "Basically, we resist recogni- tion of our assets because, once recognized, they must be *used.*" There is a fresh burst of truth here that is characteristic of the whole endeavor. The author's superb illustrations, a vital part of his message, and his talent for dealing with man's deepest prob- lem — himself — place this volume high on the list of necessary tools for those who must help others understand themselves.

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in New York City, Dr. Earl A. Loomis, Jr. has shown himself an able person in relating the theological traditions of Hebrew-Christian thought to the most recent understandings of modern psychology. His chapter exploring the thesis that the self usually makes God in the image of itself is a creative and challenging one that holds untold depths for thought. His relation of the self to the community of grace and forgiveness is a climax of honest insight. The chapter entitled "The Self in Development" is the clearest and most concise observation in this area I have read.

The Self in Pilgrimage has a tremendous message of great proportions. — *Ross M. Willis, Park Avenue Christian Church, East Orange, N.J.*

THE LADDER OF LEARNING. *By Victor Hoag. Seabury. $3.75.*

HERE is an attempt to take the newer findings in learning theory and translate them into teaching method in religious education. Conscious that nearly all church school teachers are laymen with little or no reading in psychology or pedagogy (or even the Bible!), the author adopts a breezy, popular style to catch them up on the new. In short chapters — often of only three pages — such "modern" ideas of teaching as these are discussed: starting where pupils are, lesson plans, permissive climate, diverse teaching resources, evaluation in light of goals, group dynamics, role playing, relating the content to the interests of pupils, child study, motivation, teacher-pupil planning, experience, unit teaching.

This reviewer has taught all the above "new" methods in high school. I know their value, and I could never go back to the traditional. But there is a naivete about educational reformers like Dr. Hoag who believe that "a will-to-teach is present (though dormant) in every earnest Christian." The Spanish Inquisition and the Crusades were full of earnest Christians!

These new methods are much more difficult to use than are the traditional. Every one of the new procedures has its pitfalls and its limitations — just like the traditional — and they should be so delineated by Dr. Hoag. Anything less is to lead novices into a fool's paradise. Teaching is a great deal more than a "knack" (Part II, The Knack of Teaching).

Discussion is certainly more than "guided conversation." It is indeed dubious that a lay church school teacher can learn the slogan "Start with Life" in two and a half pages when my college students find it most difficult to do after a semester of learning theory plus six weeks of student teaching. Certainly Kirkegaard, Niebuhr, Tillich, and Barth would not go along with this rosy, fudgy, watered-down Christianity: "that when we start with life, we get immediate and vigorous response; further, that when a truly real problem is shared by a group, solutions are sought and Christian answers are found." I saw many a public school teacher "start with life" and get nowhere, and many a church council uncover most un-Christian answers. Surely this reassuring summary of "Start with Life" is not true: "After you have done this a few times, you will get the feel of it, and you are not likely to go back to the old ways of expounding ancient wisdom." The following kind of solution to a problem is misleading: *"To have the subject for today carry over into next Sunday.* This is the *result* [italics his] of vital teaching; you won't need any technique for this." Another example [this time, knowing the child]: "If you want to find out what a person thinks about anything, ask him. . . . The method is basically rather simple. When you have seen it done a few times, you can try it and improve with practice." Another: "Finally, and all through, there is the way of friendship. You will come to share the life of each child, and they will love and follow you in whatever you suggest." Has the departed spirit of Dale Carnegie entered the church school?

In Chapter 41, on "Self Expression," not two pages long, the author discusses philosophy of education. He

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says, "We can assure the critics that the new, flexible ways of teaching religion are not just progressive education, mere Deweyism." One questions whether the author has read much of Dewey, who never advocated free expression as such and was never child-centered. The author continues: "We do not stimulate our children to unrestricted self expression (as would seem to be the way of all-out progressive education). I never met a teacher who practiced unrestricted self expression." This kind of cracker-barrel philosophizing is dangerous. Why?

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FAITH TO GROW ON. *By Joseph F. Green, Jr. Broadman. $2.50.*

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The entire book is readable and helpful but this reviewer found Dr. Green's chapter on the church to deny his own analysis of a faith to grow on in the traditional denominational bias in the treatment of baptism and the Lord's Supper. It is not on the high level of the rest of the book.

At any rate, the average reader will find this a worthwhile book and the average Baptist will find it a masterful summary of his own church's faith. — *William O. Byrd, First Methodist Church, New Orleans, La.*

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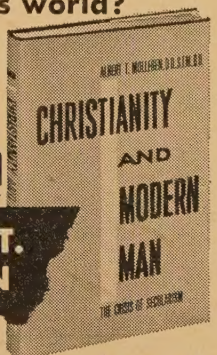

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THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY
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Pulpit Calendar

Apr. 1 — Easter Eve.
Apr. 2 — Easter.
Apr. 9 — 1st Sunday after Easter.
Apr. 16 — National Christian College Day.
Apr. 23 — 3rd Sunday after Easter.
Apr. 30 — 4th Sunday after Easter.
May 5 — May Fellowship Day.
May 7 — Rural Life Sunday.
May 7 – 14 — National Family Week.
May 11 — Ascension Day.
May 14 — Festival of the Christian Home (Mother's Day).
May 21 — Whitsunday (Pentecost).
May 28 — Trinity Sunday.
May 30 — Memorial Day.
June 4 — 2nd Sunday after Pentecost.
June 11 — Children's Sunday, 3rd Sunday after Pentecost.
June 18 — 4th Sunday after Pentecost.
June 25 — Nature Sunday, 5th Sunday after Pentecost.

THE TRADING POST

[You are invited to make free use of these sermon ideas, outlines, texts, thought primers, illustrations and quotations provided that for each one used you submit one of your own of equal quality and originality. Send all items for exchange to The Trading Post, The Pulpit, 407 S. Dearborn St., Chicago 5, Ill. Items accepted will be published with the name of the sender. — Ed.]

Remnants from a much used notebook:

"When one has no character one has to apply a method." — Camus

"Miracles take place, not because they were performed but because they were believed." — Luther

"Thus you see we maintain a trade, not for gold, silver, or jewels; not for silks; nor for spices; nor any other commodity of matter; but only for God's first creature, which was *Light.*" — Hugh Miller

If you missed *The Doctor and the Soul,* by Viktor E. Frankl, when it was published in 1955 by Alfred A. Knopf, look it up. To the psychological explanations — the will to pleasure and the will to power — Frankl and his school add the will to meaning. This is a good book, not only for you to read but also for you to give to your doctor.

"Consult the eternal oracles and disregard the temporary noises, menaces and deliriums of the world." — *Thomas Carlyle*

"Mind shall the harder be,
Heart shall the keener be,
Mood shall the more be,
As our main lessens." — Brihtwold's death-song, 991 A.D.

PULPIT POST

(Continued from page 2)

jump to do their bidding." Try as I will, I cannot see any valid connection between the text and the sermon.

Most of us are well practiced, if not as skilled as Mr. Elmer, in tacking our own ideas on scriptural pegs. It appears to me The Pulpit does us no real service by encouraging the crime.

R. David Steele
Cottonwood Presbyterian Church
Salt Lake City, Utah

Never Too Old

SIR: Your February issue has a needed article by Conrad H. Massa, "A Theology of Preaching." In it he links me with Augustine, who wrote memorably about my subject, *The Fine Art of Preaching* (1937). That was the earliest of my books in the field. If Mr. Massa had read the later ones he would have found that my mind changed after 1937. I began to base such teaching on biblical theology and on study of Bible preaching, as well as sermons by later masters. So it seems possible even for an oldster to change his mind!

Andrew W. Blackwood
Professor of homiletics, emeritus
Princeton Seminary

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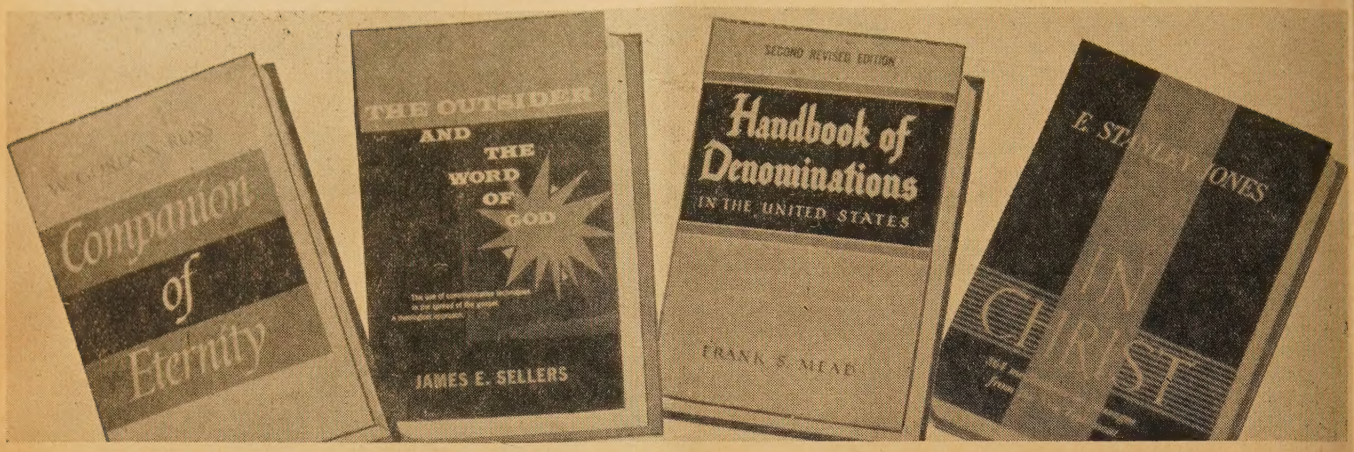

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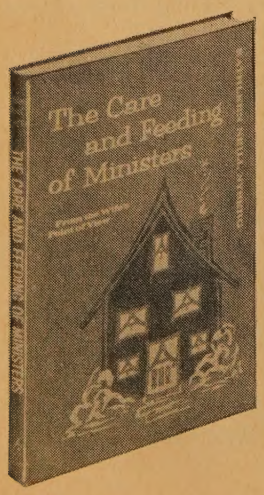
. . . *and one especially for his wife*



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